#### *Viewpoint*

Do you feel that the 'Don't ask, don't tell' policy should be repealed?

By Jasmine Walthall

**"Y**es, we should be more open and accepting. It is not fair to say that they cannot be themselves and serve their country. Their sexual orientation should not even be a factor."

Pvt. Jessica Ziegler

Company F, 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment





**No, it has worked** so far and should be left as is. It has no effect on how they perform their job. It would cause more conflict than it would do good."

Spc. Rex Barret

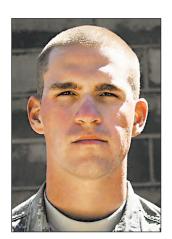
Company F, 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment

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m ``N}$ o, not everyone is ready to accept gays and lesbians. It will have many negative effects and will be a distraction more than anything."

Pvt. Matt Jett

Company F, 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment





"No. I would be concerned about the safety of those that came out from people who have an 'old school Army' way of thinking."

Pvt. Evan Glowzinski

Company F. 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment

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m ``N}$ o, it should stay as is. It should not matter what someone is, and them being open about it should not make that much of a difference, but since it would, it should stay as is."

Pvt. Asia Bolds

Company F, 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment





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# Commentary

# Suicide prevention: We all share responsibility

By Robert Johnson Managing editor

t's great to see that Fort Leonard Wood has recently welcomed a Suicide Prevention Program manager. Ernest LaMertha, a retired colonel and chaplain, will be a welcome asset in the fight to

But having a manager to help prevent suicides is only one part of the fight.

prevent suicides.

We all share the responsibility to stop these untimely deaths.

**Johnson** 

I remember the first encounter I ever had with a suicide. I couldn't have been more than 12, maybe younger. A kid in another school someone I had never met himself in the boys' bathroom. It was a closed-door topic, and my parents talked about it in hushed tones only adding to the mystery. At the time, I was sure it was foul play, because the concept of ending one's own life was too foreign for me to even imagine. I couldn't grasp the idea that something could be so bad that you need to end your life.

I still don't grasp that idea very well to this very day, but I know that suicides do occur, having them strike several times over the years closer to home and with people much more familiar to me. While

the list of those suicides include a cousin, a coworker, a neighbor, a couple classmates from school and a fellow Soldier, the lingering questions in my mind are common in every instance: "Could this have been prevented? What if something was done? What if I had helped?'

I firmly believe that each and every suicide can be prevented, but not without action. To do that, we have to become the ACE in prevention

ACE is an acronym that I wish I knew about when my cousin took his own life. It's real simple. ACE means Ask, Care and Escort. If only I could have asked John how he was doing, really cared about what his answers were, and escorted him to a facility for help. The "what if" question keeps coming back to me; what if we had simply asked him; what if we had reached out and showed we cared, and what if we stayed with him until we could get John professional help.

Part of prevention is recognizing the signs — those behavior changes that reach beyond the facial expressions. In another instance of suicide in my life, a friend that had been glum and depressed suddenly seemed happy. We shrugged it off that Jerry was just getting better, but in reality, he had arrived at the conclusion that ending his life would solve his problems. The morning we found out that Jerry had committed

suicide, everyone in the unit was shocked, but looking back and with today's training, we should have seen the signs.

And again, I thought, "What could I have done differently? What if I had only asked him how he was

Since then, I have been trying to

be more astute to coworkers and friends. And yes, I have been somewhat of a goober, but I have pointblanked asked individuals if they were considering killing themselves The reaction I have gotten is not always one of "thanks for caring about me," but asking someone if they have suicidal thoughts shouldn't be candy-coated.

The bottom line is that we all have this responsibility to stem the tide of suicides. In June, the Army experienced a record number of suicides — a record that no one wants to break.

If you have access to an Army Knowledge Online account, take the prevention training — and then apply your new knowledge.

It's great that the post now has a Suicide Prevention Program manager, but it would truly be wonderful if everyone were part of the effort to reduce suicides in our community to zero. Be an ACE and learn to ask how the individual is doing and if they have thoughts of suicide.

Don't let the question you later ask yourself be "What if."

## Inner strength of moral courage

By Air Force Brig. Gen. Darryl Burke Air Force News Service

f I were to walk into just about any shop on base and say, "We're under attack. Grab a weapon and follow me," I'm confident most people would do just that. I've spent enough time in the area of responsibility and have watched our service members in combat to know that we don't lack physical courage.

But what would happen if I walked into your office and announced the worst idea you had ever heard? How many people would have the moral courage to speak up and say, "Sir, that's not a good idea, and here's why...

Moral courage is every bit as important as physical courage, though it's not always found in great supply.

At home station, the need for physical courage is comparatively rare to the need for moral courage. Our business is complex and specialized, and a lot of people, complete with ideas of varying quality, have a vested interest in what we do.

When those ideas are good, we need to have the sense to adapt our way of thinking. When those ideas are bad, we need to have the moral courage to push back respectfully and with facts.

Does speaking up when a general officer, colonel or chief master sergeant presents a questionable idea involve some personal risk? Sure it does — that's why it's called moral courage.

With few exceptions, people don't reach those senior levels by consistently ignoring good advice and making bad decisions. Instead, they are typically successful because they listen to smart people, adjust their vision and

But it's important not to confuse moral courage with brashness. If you're going to take a stand, make sure you have your facts straight and that your argument is sound.

An unfounded opinion isn't likely to get you very far, which leads to an important corollary: if you have moral courage and take a position on issues, sooner or later you're going to be just plain wrong. We're human, so that's just the way it is.

Leaders have to exercise wisdom of a different flavor the courage to let people be wrong. Sometimes we're too hard on good people who are sincerely trying to do the right thing, but who make an honest mistake.

Not that mistakes shouldn't have consequences, but those consequences need to be reasonable and in the teaching spirit. If you hammer people when they speak up for their point of view, pretty soon they won't speak at all, and you'll lose the value of their advice.

It's also important to remember that there's a big difference between being wrong and being unethical. Selfish, irresponsible or dishonest actors can quickly suck the oxygen out of an environment of trust. An honest mistake is one thing; being lazy, underhanded or deceitful is something else entirely.

There is a very good reason why Integrity is the first of our core values. We have to be able to trust each other to act in good faith. Every aircrew member trusts his or her life to the maintainers who work on their aircraft. Every person in the AOR trusts his or her life to the security forces on the perimeter. In the training environment, every commander, flight chief and section supervisor trusts us to deliver technically superior Airmen.

Leaders trust their people to do the right thing and act

in good faith. As a commander, I can accept someone being wrong or making a mistake if they are acting in genuine good faith. I've been passionately wrong about issues once or twice in my own career, and was fortunate to have leaders who made it a learning experience for me rather than a career-damaging event.

As I've written before, none of us can do this alone. "We" is a much stronger word than "I," and we need everyone's ideas and opinions to be successful. Ethical behavior and integrity are critical to the open exchange of ideas, and create an atmosphere where people are more likely to muster the moral courage to speak up. That benefits everyone.

(Editor's note: Burke is the commander of the Air Force 82nd Training Wing at Sheppard Air Force Base,

### Commanding officers need hickey lessons

By Jacey Eckhart Special to GUIDON

n a single month, the Navy fired the commanding officer

of the USS Peleliu for unduly familiar behavior, as well as the head of the telecommunications command in Bahrain, because of multiple relationships

**Eckhart** with others in the

command. Surely now Big Navy has got to admit that whatever they are teaching their leaders about sexual relationships is just not working.

Not the threats. Not the punishments.

Not the mothers-in-law reading humiliating headlines to you over the phone. No matter what they try, the Navy has still had to relieve seven ship captains this year alone. What is that telling them?

It is telling me that those trainers ought to change tactics. It is telling me they ought to learn how to wield sexual humiliation from my little mom. Think I'm exaggerating? OK. Take the time I got one little hickey in high school. OK. It was kind of a

line of hickies — like I had been attacked by James Dyson and all his

5,000 prototypes. Anyway, we were

in the middle of a shopping center

when my mom noticed.

"OH NOOOOOOO! SOME-THING IS BLEEDING ON YOUR NECK. YOU ARE INJURRRED!"

"Mom, would you hush," I hissed at her as the crowds gathered, peered at my neck, smirked. "It's just a hickey."

"A HICKEY??? WHAT'S A HICKEY???"

"It's a passion mark, Mom. A love bite. You know, a hickey.'

My mom stumbled on for a few steps. Laid her hand on my arm. Leaned in and whispered. "How...exactly... did you do that?"

Turns out, the nice girls in my mom's class at St. Mary's High School in 1959 could conjugate Latin verbs, but not anything else. My punishment for getting a hickey was explaining how exactly how I got a hickey. In excruciating detail. With a crowd watching. I never had a hickey again. Nev-

er. Nor any of my kin.

Which is exactly what the Navy

ought to do about commanding officers, executive officers and command master chiefs who get caught messing with the crew. They should get the details in excruciating detail

in front of a crowd. Now I'm not really interested in humiliating anyone in real life. I'm just saying we really do need to

understand how people who have

consistently performed at such a level that they attained command can

suddenly fall. Granted, we know human beings do not always act in their own best interest, but how does this happen in a command? What is the process here? What makes them think they won't get caught? What are they telling themselves when they allow themselves to break all the rules they know about command? How does this affect the microcosm of command and the lives of those family members on shore?

Big Navy needs to take a note from Yale, who hired Gen. Stanley McChrystal to lecture on leadership after the fiasco at the hands of Rolling Stone. Who better to lecture on sexual ethics all over the fleet than these folks who slipped down that slope? I say that these fallen commanders with 17 or 18 years in the military who want to stay in the military and still collect retirement should have to take a crap job that no one else wants to do, and become the teachers of the sex ed part of command schools.

We could make it a lecture no one could sleep through. I could help. After all, I learned at my moth-

(Editor's note: Eckhart writes a regular column for cinchouse.com and other military publications.)

To send submissions or story ideas, e-mail: guidoneditor@myguidon.com